

E2: Emma Hansen

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SPEAKERS

Sophie Warrick, Music/Sound Design, Emma Hansen



Music/Sound Design 00:38

[Audio collage fades in and out]



Sophie Warrick 00:39

Hello wonderful people! Welcome to Queer Backroads, a podcast that focuses on queerness in rural Minnesota. I'm your host, Sophie Warrick, and my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'm a fat queer, curious creative, currently located in the Twin Cities, but I grew up in Bemidji, a small town in northern Minnesota. My art practice focuses on a lot of different topics and mediums but most importantly, it focuses on love and asking questions. According to the Movement Advancement Project, and estimated 2.9 to 3.8 million queer people live in rural communities across the United States. This podcast aims to tell their stories. There is some explicit language in this podcast so consider this your warning, you may visit my link tree at linktr.ee/SophieWarrick to learn more about this podcast project to find organizations to uplift and show notes and transcripts of each episode. That's L-I-N-K-T-R DOT E-E SLASH S-O-P-H-I-E-W-A-R-R-I-C-K. My guest today is someone that I've learned isn't afraid to speak her mind, especially through her social media presence. She's someone that I can relate to on so many different levels, and I know that you'll be able to as well. She's kind, she's quirky, and she has lots to say about D&D. Without further introduction, I'm going to pass this to a conversation between Emma Hansen and myself.



Emma Hansen 02:13

Okay, so my name is Emma Hansen. I use she/her pronouns. I live about 30 minutes south of Rochester. So I'm about like 15 miles north of the Iowa border. And I actually work in customer service for a bank. I've been doing well, I've had that position for a year. And before that I was a teller with the bank. So...



Sophie Warrick 02:33

Nice! That's really cool. I envy people that are tellers y'all look so cool doing your job.



Emma Hansen 02:39

He does have a pretty, pretty cool vibe to it.



Sophie Warrick 02:42

Exactly. It's like just bad ass, you know? (Both laugh)



Emma Hansen 02:44

Yeah, you feel very powerful. Exactly.



Sophie Warrick 02:49

And if you're comfortable sharing, is there a specific town you live in? Or is do you just like live in the middle of nowhere south of Rochester?



Emma Hansen 02:56

So I live in on a farm. We don't actually farm but I live on a farm about three miles outside of Racine. Which you might not you might not know where that is.



Sophie Warrick 03:06

I do not!

 Emma Hansen 03:07
It is...do you know where Stordville is?

 Sophie Warrick 03:11
No, I don't think so.

 Emma Hansen 03:12
Okay, so it's about 20 miles down the main highway out of Rochester.

 Sophie Warrick 03:19
Gotcha.

 Emma Hansen 03:21
It's got a population of about 400.

 Sophie Warrick 03:23
Nice, nice.

 Emma Hansen 03:24
So it's a it's a little little blip on the map.

 Sophie Warrick 03:27
Uh huh. Have you lived there your whole life or...?

 Emma Hansen 03:32
I lived there my whole life. My family moved there. Like the year before I was born.

 Sophie Warrick 03:37

Nice!

 Emma Hansen 03:38
I lived there my whole life, haven't moved out yet.

 Sophie Warrick 03:40
Do you think you'll move out soon? Or do you think...

 Emma Hansen 03:43
Yeah, I'm looking at buying a house within the next few months.

 Sophie Warrick 03:46
That's exciting!

 Music/Sound Design 03:47
[Ambient birds fade in]

 Sophie Warrick 03:47
(Voiceover) There is no one singular lived experience, just like there's no one single queer experience, just like there's no one single rural experience. At the same time, many people in rural parts of Minnesota describe their communities in really similar ways that they're built around family and close-knit communities centered around strong social institutions like churches, schools, local businesses, that are all deeply connected to place and the environment and based in a sense of self reliance to make change in their own communities.

 Music/Sound Design 04:24
[Ambient birds fade out]

 Sophie Warrick 04:27

What are three things that I should know about you? It can be anything at all!



Emma Hansen 04:31

Okay, three things you should know about me. The first thing that comes to mind is from a huge family. So you know, my sister, so I'm one of 13 kids from a very large family. I love theater. I'm an avid reader. And I'm a huge D&D nerd.



Sophie Warrick 04:50

Nice. Really?



Emma Hansen 04:51

Yeah. Yes.



Sophie Warrick 04:53

That's awesome. How long have you been into D&D?



Emma Hansen 04:56

I've been watching D&D shows for the last like three years, and I recently, I wanted to play for a long time and recently realized that pretty much the only way I was going to get to start playing was if I started DMing a group. So I started DMing a group in October of last year.



Sophie Warrick 05:16

Nice. Do you like it?



Emma Hansen 05:17

Yeah. I love it. It is. It's incredible. It's so much fun.



Sophie Warrick 05:22

That's awesome. I have so much like, I know very, very, very little about D&D, and I've

played just a few games, but, um, I have so much fucking respect for DMs, because I have no idea how y'all do it?



Emma Hansen 05:34

Oh my god, it is it is crazy. I was I was so nervous about doing it. But you kind of just get started and it works out. Somehow magically, it works out.



Sophie Warrick 05:46

Who's in your group? Like? Did you know them all beforehand? How did you get?



Emma Hansen 05:50

Yeah. So because I started during the pandemic, everybody in my group was in my immediate family. My older brother played D&D. My dad played D&D when he was little. So my younger siblings are most of who was in my party. But I told them, I was gonna do a campaign and they were really excited. And so I got a lot of them who showed interest. And so I have a party of nine players.



Sophie Warrick 06:13

Nice! That's awesome.



Emma Hansen 06:15

Yeah.



Music/Sound Design 06:15

[Ambient birds fade in]



Sophie Warrick 06:16

(Voiceover) The 36 Questions That Lead to Love are a set of questions developed in the 1990s by psychologists and other researchers to see if two strangers can develop an intimate connection just from asking each other a series of increasingly personal questions. To be honest, I don't really understand the science behind it. But I really love

the idea of asking someone intimate questions. In order to get to know them quickly. I asked a few questions to each guest every episode.

 Music/Sound Design 06:44
[Ambient birds fade out]

 Sophie Warrick 06:47
How would you describe like your perfect day?

 Emma Hansen 06:51
My perfect day? Oh, my goodness. It would definitely have to be with my family. You know, nice early morning and probably go for a run. I am a bit into fitness. Yeah, just hanging out with the family maybe read a good book. I'm really kind of like a peaceful, quiet. Just spend time with the people that I love and that I care about.

 Sophie Warrick 07:16
I love that. That's beautiful. Do you have any books you're reading right now?

 Emma Hansen 07:21
At the moment, I just finished the last book I was reading and I cannot remember what it was called. (Both laugh) But now, yeah. Yeah, I've just been with work. So recently, I haven't had time to get into a good series. I got a bunch of like fantasy books that have been recommended to me. But I've just been reading like, trashy romance novels.

 Sophie Warrick 07:39
You got to get those in, you know?

 Emma Hansen 07:43
They're an easy read. Yeah.



Sophie Warrick 07:47

I love that. Um, I'm trying to think about like, what my perfect day would be I have like, no idea. Probably spending it with my partner and their dog. And then getting we're just like watching TV and knitting all day and eating pizza.



Emma Hansen 08:05

Yeah, just kind of just kind of doing nothing and being with the people that I care about.



Sophie Warrick 08:11

I love that. And then the last question that I wanted to ask you is, what do you wish that the world had more of?



Emma Hansen 08:21

What do I wish that the world had more of? I wish the world had more. I really wish the world had more willingness to acknowledge its mistakes. You know, the things that we've society, the things that we've screwed up in the past. And we tend to just have this concept of well we fixed it. So it's all better now. And we can forget about it. And we can't and shouldn't. And we just don't have we have a dialogue about that. So I wish there was just more willingness to talk about things that we've improved on, and things that we could still improve on.



Sophie Warrick 08:59

Yeah. I totally agree with that. That was very beautifully said. Well, thank you. Um, I know that we talked about this a little bit already, but could you just tell us again, where you live and where you grew up?



Emma Hansen 09:15

Okay, so I live just outside of a little town with 400 people called Racine. I live on the farm that my mom actually grew up on. So my grandfather, before he passed away was a hog farmer. And so we live on the hog farm that she grew up on. We don't farm it. We rent the land. My dad's a software programmer. So we, we rent the farmland but I live out in the country on a like a five acre yard.



Sophie Warrick 09:45

I love that. And you've lived there your whole life too?



Emma Hansen 09:47

I've lived there my whole life. Yeah.



Sophie Warrick 09:50

Can you describe more of what it's like to live where you live?



Emma Hansen 09:53

So my house is on the little, little couple acre patch of like farmyard. So we have our house. And then there's actually an old barn that we just use for storage. And around it, there's fields everywhere, because it's a farming community. So all of the neighbors are farmers, which means that it's a really close community. Because when all your neighbors are farmers, and you live in the middle of all their fields, they're out around your place all the time. So it's an everybody and everybody knows everybody kind of place. And it's just, it's very quiet.



Sophie Warrick 10:28

Nice, nice. That's awesome. Is it ever like? How do I word this, like, do you know your neighbors? Like as well, as you know, your family, you'd say? Or do you think that maybe like a little more reserved type of relationship with your neighbors?



Emma Hansen 10:48

it's a little more reserved. For my mom, she grew up with a lot of the the farmers who are now you know, now have kids and are the are the farmer of that land that was their parents. So my mom is really close with a lot of our neighbors. But I'm not as close with many of them. And not many of them actually, have kids. Just growing up, I didn't have a lot of friends in the area because we were the ones who had kids, just us.



Music/Sound Design 11:16

[Ambient birds fade in]



Sophie Warrick 11:16

(Voiceover) Not only do queer people live in rural America, but many of them want to and enjoy living in rural America. Queer people in urban and rural areas report similar levels of subjective well-being, health and satisfaction. In discussions with queer people living in rural communities, researchers find that for many queer people in these rural areas, living in the rural area might be just as important to who they are as being queer.



Music/Sound Design 11:46

[Ambient birds fade out]



Sophie Warrick 11:48

And then I'm wondering, did you go to a public school? Were you homeschooled?



11:53

So I was homeschooled. From the homeschooled family. everybody in my family. I enjoyed it. I know some people don't. And one of the big things that people don't like looking back about having been homeschooled, so they didn't have a lot of friends when they were kids. And that really wasn't an issue for me, because I'm from such a big family. Yeah, and all of us kids just genuinely like each other. So my friends were my family. So I would add and have that missing in my life. When I was younger.



Sophie Warrick 12:22

I'm wondering, like, where you might feel most at home, whether that be like, your little farmhouse, or if that's like a certain coffee shop you love, a bookstore, something like that. Just when you think of the word home, where do you think of?



Emma Hansen 12:38

When I think of the word home, I actually think of my car. Lydia lives, like three hours away from us now. So anytime we want to go see her, my younger sister and I will get in the car, and we'll drive like three hours out to her place like we're doing now. I will spend the day and then we'll drive back the next day. And so those drives and just being in the car with my siblings, and who are very close with my older sister and my younger sister, so that those times together just really feel like home.



Sophie Warrick 13:12

I love that. That makes me so smiley. (Emma laughs) It's just so cute. And so it just warms my heart. I'm an only child, so I've never really had any like sibling relationship because I don't have siblings. And it just makes me so happy to hear. You just hear so many horror stories of people from large families, like not having any relationship with their siblings or not liking their family. And so it's very refreshing to hear. Do you think there is any reason in particular or like any opportunity, that is why you and your family is so close?



Emma Hansen 13:53

Well, part of it is just we live in the country. So we were the only people around our age. So if you wanted to interact with anybody your age, it was your siblings, we kind of had kind of had to get on with them if you wanted to have friends. But another part of it, I think is my mom is a stay at home mom. And she had all of us kind of very quickly in a row. And she was homeschooling and trying to run a house out in the country. And so in order for our family to function as a unit, we had to learn to get along. So she put a lot of time and effort into teaching us how to form relationships and how to deal with your siblings when they annoy you and when they irritate you. And especially when you have younger siblings, they do a lot of just annoying things because they want your attention and they know that even if you're annoyed, at least you're paying attention to them. So she put a lot of time into teaching us that a lot of the time when people are when your siblings are trying to annoy you it was just because they want to spend time with you.



Sophie Warrick 15:00

What do you think might be like one of the best pieces of advice or like, things that your mom taught you growing up?



Emma Hansen 15:07

Oh, gosh, there's so many things.



Sophie Warrick 15:09

It's a big question.



Emma Hansen 15:16

I would say the thing that I think about the most that she told me would be, it's better to do it the slow way and do it right the first time. So to put the time in and the effort in to, to make something beautiful the first time rather than do it fast and mess it up and have to go back and try and fix it.



Sophie Warrick 15:38

For sure.



Emma Hansen 15:38

That's just one thing that I think about a lot.



Sophie Warrick 15:42

That's really great advice. And like, I think to teach you and such, I'm assuming at such a young age



Emma Hansen 15:49

Yeah, as a child.



Music/Sound Design 16:06

[Ambient birds and mandolin fade in and out]



Sophie Warrick 16:07

I'm wondering, like, I know that you said that you you've never moved and that you've stayed in the same area your whole life. But you also mentioned earlier that you're planning on buying a house soon. And so I'm just wondering what all that means to you what's going through your head, as you're like preparing to do that, and just how you...



Emma Hansen 16:26

Oh my god it's so stressful. (Both laugh) It's such a big thing. I'm actually hoping to move just to somewhere nearby, because I really want to want to stay around my family. But when I was younger, and when I was first coming to terms with with who I am, and with

my identity, there was a large portion of time there where I was just like, I've, I've got to get out. I can't, I can't be here and be who I am. So for a long time, I was just trying to figure out a way to move to L.A. or to New York or or Portland or somewhere to be in a city and be just a long ways away from rural Midwest America,



Sophie Warrick 17:09

For sure.



Emma Hansen 17:11

But I've kind of come to terms with the environment that exists around queerness in this area. And I've also kind of acknowledged that unless queer people stay here and making an effort to change it. That's not gonna change.



Sophie Warrick 17:25

Hmm. Mmhhh. Wow, that really resonated with me. Thank you for saying that. I totally agree. And that it's difficult. I mean, feel free to like, be like, that's not how I feel. But like, what I just like, think when I hear you say that is it's almost like taking one for the team in a way.



Emma Hansen 17:48

Yeah, I don't want I don't want a younger queer person to be in the position I was where you look around at your community, and you don't see anyone like you.



Sophie Warrick 17:57

Yeah. Oh, I think that's...good on you, Emma. Come on. And right, like, I'm assuming, like, the reason that you wanted to move to New York, and L.A. right is just because of the just different populations that there are there...



Emma Hansen 18:20

Yeah there's a huge difference. Yeah, hugely different. Just in terms of a demographic it is a general worldview. There's a lot more. And then also, I, I do theater, and I read and write. So those are two great places if you want to be if you're into theater.



Sophie Warrick 18:38

Uh huh. I love that I did the same thing growing up. Huge theater nerd loved everything. Watch the Tony's every year. But that's awesome. I'm wondering I asked this of someone a few weeks ago, just in casual conversation and i think i asked Sarah in our last conversation, but um, I'm wondering who like the first like queer person in media that you ever saw or heard about was?



Emma Hansen 19:10

First person that I remember. As like my first time when I was like, oh, this is this is a thing! There are other people who are like this was actually Mitch Grassi from Pentatonix. Yeah, that was my first person.



Sophie Warrick 19:27

That's awesome. Oh my god. Yeah...It's such like a theatre -- I'm sorry not it's in my thoughts -- like --



Emma Hansen 19:37

I KNOW! I was into acapella and music and so that turned me on to Pentatonix. And then I was like, oh my god!



Music/Sound Design 20:01

[Ambient birds and mandolin fade in and out]



Sophie Warrick 20:02

Have you ever had an experience in like your rural area with like someone older responding positively? I immediately think of a few of my high school teachers were really, really supportive of like the queer community in my small town. But that was like, the only population of people like I immediately can think of. And I'm wondering if you just have any similar experience or different experience?



Emma Hansen 20:27

Uh, yeah, there's a few people. There's a couple people who are, who are queer in in not

the small town that I live next to, but the the next largest one that's only about 10 miles away from my place where I did a lot of the theater that I did. Like the drama club, teacher, she was really, she was really great, and really, really accepting. And then there's a, there's a couple, there's a queer couple that I know, that were just really great to, to have them be existing, and then also to be a part of witnessing them raise their child and just have an eight year old kid who would talk about things like gay marriage and transgender rights. And he was just so aware and so willing to discuss queerness It was so refreshing.



Sophie Warrick 21:20

Yeah, that's exactly what I was about to say. It's just refreshing to hear those conversations we had. Yeah. Um, and then I'm also just wondering if you have any advice for queer youth, from rural areas, or just queer youth in general too that might be struggling with their identity and anything you might want to say to them or advice you want to give?



Emma Hansen 21:47

Yeah, the first thing I would say is, you're not alone. If you're in a rural area, it's, it's really easy to feel isolated. And to look to places like L.A. and New York and be like, if I was there, if it would be different. But you're not alone. And there are other queer people in your area, maybe not as close and as open as you would want them to be. But we are there. We're, we're everywhere. And then the other thing I would say is, you don't have to have all the answers right now, you don't have to be able to put a word to your identity right now, you don't have to know that before you're 20 or before you're 30, there's no, there's no time limit on when you have to be able to define your identity and explain your identity to someone else. As long as you know who you are. You don't need to justify it to anyone else.



Sophie Warrick 22:44

I love that you said that. Because I really identify with that last part that you said, I friggin have no idea how to identify. And I like, I've always been very uncomfortable identifying as one label or one thing. And so I'm like, I'm queer. Like, I don't know what's going on.



Emma Hansen 23:01

But I'm very fortunate to be able to do identify myself by a single label and you know, have some labels that just fit me very well. But it's a very narrow box and people don't fit

in boxes.



Sophie Warrick 23:13

Exactly. Exactly. Oh, put it on t-shirt.



Emma Hansen 23:17

Yeah.



Sophie Warrick 23:20

Nice. And then you kind of already mentioned it. But is there anything else that you'd like to say to queer folks that might be feeling isolated right now, especially with the pandemic? And things like that?



Emma Hansen 23:32

Yeah, yeah. Well, you're not alone. And it will feel like you're isolated, especially during the pandemic, when you can't go and see, see people and it's much harder to meet queer people in your area. But there is a there's a tremendous online community.



Sophie Warrick 23:47

Yeah!



Emma Hansen 23:48

For queer people...and I typically pretty much the only online community that I'm a part of, is the D&D community. But there's, there's a huge amount of very welcoming very open queer people who would just love to interact with and be a part of a queer person's journey. So there's, there's ways online to meet people. And even if that's not an option for you, for whatever reason, you aren't alone. And the other thing I would say is, right now isn't the end of the story. There's going to be time that goes on after this. If you're living in a place where it's really hard to come to terms with who you are and to be open about who you are, there will be a time in your life where you will be able to leave that place if you want to. Where you'll be able to go to a place where you can be more open. You're...I said this to someone not that long ago, but your youth isn't the end of your life. If you're a

teenager or a middle schooler who's struggling with being who they are and around their friends in their community and their family, just remember that you're going to grow up, and you're going to go to college or leave home, and you'll be able to be your authentic self.

 Music/Sound Design 25:14
[Ambient birds fade in]

 Sophie Warrick 25:14
(Voiceover) Internet access further helps queer people in rural areas access vital information and assistance that they may not have available in their rural communities. A number of queer and allied organizations offer Know Your Rights materials for queer people focusing on everyday issues ranging from supporting queer youth in schools to legal rights to employment, health care, and for queer parents raising children and more. For queer people in rural communities, internet access is critical in order to access these resources and understand the protections available to them through local, state and federal laws.

 Emma Hansen 25:49
[Ambient birds fade out]

 Sophie Warrick 25:53
Right, I'm in a few different Facebook groups that I love and adore. I currently live in St. Paul. And so I'm a part of, if you live in St. Paul, like anybody that might be listening to this, I would highly recommend being a part of the Queer Exchange in the Twin Cities. It's a great, like online community on Facebook. Um, and then also just, there's a Facebook group that I'm on that I absolutely adore called, "I'm gay and this is crafting". It's so fucking funny. I love everything on there. And people just share like their most recent crafts, or their most recent projects that they're doing, and sometimes we will try to sell them sometimes people are just sharing them. And it's awesome. Oh my gosh, also...and then there's also this other one Facebook group called, um, "If you turned that into an earring, a lesbian would buy it".

 Emma Hansen 26:48

Oh my gosh! (Emma laughs)



Sophie Warrick 26:51

Anyone that is queer should join and like that loves earrings should join that Facebook group. It is the funniest thing in the world. But I also I don't know if you've ever heard of this podcast I know that you might be interested in to there's a podcast called "Country Queers". That does a very similar thing to that what I'm doing, um, where this one person just did a ton of interviews, I think over the course of several months, and then raised enough money to be able to just work on the podcast for I think, a few weeks and then released the whole thing. It's a wonderful, wonderful podcast all about rural queer, queer people. Um, I'm pretty sure all over the country, but if nobody's heard that you should go listen to it because it's a great podcast.



Emma Hansen 27:40

Yeah, I haven't heard of that. I'll check it out.



Sophie Warrick 27:42

Oh, you totally -- I love it. It's it makes me so smiley the whole time. I'm watching it.



Emma Hansen 27:48

That's incredible.



Sophie Warrick 27:50

Um, but yeah, I just also wanted to give you an opportunity to promote or shout out any new work, upcoming projects, maybe virtual events that you may or may not have. But if you want I want to give some space for that. So feel free.



Emma Hansen 28:05

Yeah I don't I don't actually have any, any projects or anything of my own. Just shout out. I would just say if you're a D&D nerd, and you're a queer person, or you're a queer person who's looking to get into D&D, check out "Dimension 20" because they're a great show with some, some amazing queer cast members and a lot of great queer representation.

And that's just the fun, the fun way to get into D&D.



Sophie Warrick 28:30

Love it!



Emma Hansen 28:31

If that's something you're into at all, check that out.



Sophie Warrick 28:34

That's awesome. Oh, sweet. I'm gonna check it out.



Music/Sound Design 28:40

[Ambient birds and mandolin fade in]



Sophie Warrick 28:42

You just listened to a conversation between Emma Hansen and myself, Sophie Warrick. Thank you so much to Emma for joining me on Queer Backroads. I'm so thankful for your stories, your laughter and everything that you bring to the world. If you'd like to contact Emma, you can find her on Instagram at @HansenEmmaLou. That's H-A-N-S-E-N-E-M-M-A-L-O-U. To all my rural queers. I know you're out there. I hope you're listening and I hope you're finding your community. If you're interested in show notes and transcripts of each episode, you can visit my link tree at linktr.ee/SophieWarrick. That's L-I-N-K-T-R DOT E-E SLASH S-O-P-H-I-E-W-A-R-R-I-C-K. You can also learn more about this podcast project and various ways to contact me if you're interested. I hope your day is filled with light and love, and I challenge you to try something new today. At the end of each episode, I asked a question for you to ponder for as long as you like. What makes you feel energized? What makes you feel at peace? Thanks for listening. [Ambient birds and mandolin fade out]